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Foundations and the Charisma of Giving: A Historical Sociology of Philanthropy in Germany and the United States

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Abstract Looking at foundations in the United States and in Germany from around 1800 to the present from a historical-sociological perspective, the article focuses on the social significance of foundations over the course of time—which social relationships and exchanges they promote, which guiding principles they institutionalize, how they accrue charisma, how they relate to the public good, and which social groups use these instruments to which ends. In both societies, foundations embody the principle of charismatically charged exclusivity. Foundations try to harmonize individual objectives with an idea of the common good that is considered sacrosanct. Large sums of money dedicated to the common good possess a charisma, making them rather immune to criticism and causing them to be perceived positively. In this sense, they occupy a central position within both societies and contribute to their stratification.

Résumé Examinant les fondations aux États-Unis et en Allemagne des années 1800 à nos jours, dans une perspective historique et sociologique, cet article porte sur l'importance sociale des fondations au cours du temps : les rapports sociaux et les échanges qu'elles favorisent, les principes directeurs qu'elles institutionnalisent, comment elles acquièrent leur charisme, leurs rapports avec l'intérêt public, et les groupes sociaux qui utilisent ces organisations et à quelles fins. Dans les deux sociétés, les fondations incarnent le principe d'exclusivité chargée d'un point de vue charismatique. Les fondations s'efforcent d'harmoniser les objectifs individuels avec l'idée de l'intérêt commun, considéré comme sacro-saint. Les importantes sommes d'argent destinées au bien commun ont du charisme, les protégeant ainsi des critiques et les amenant à être perçues de manière positive. En ce sens, elles occupent une position centrale au sein de ces deux sociétés et participent à leur stratification.

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Zusammenfassung Der vorliegende Beitrag konzentriert sich auf die gesellschaftliche Bedeutung von Stiftungen und betrachtet dazu diese Institutionen in den USA und Deutschland im Zeitraum von etwa 1800 bis heute aus einer historisch-soziologischen Perspektive. Der Beitrag befasst sich insbesondere damit, welche sozialen Beziehungen sie fördern, welche Leitideen sie institutionalisieren, wie sie Charisma entwickeln, in welcher Beziehung sie zum Gemeinwohl stehen und mit der Frage, welche sozialen Gruppen diese Instrumente zu welchen Zielen einsetzen. In beiden Gesellschaften verkörpern Stiftungen das Prinzip charismatischer Exklusivität. Stiftungen versuchen, individuelle Ziele mit dem Konzept des Gemeinwohls, das als sakrosankt betrachtet wird, in Einklang zu bringen. Große Geldsummen, die für das Gemeinwohl bestimmt sind, ziehen Charisma auf sich und immunisieren Stiftungen gegen Kritik. In diesem Sinne haben sie in beiden Gesellschaften eine zentrale Stellung inne und tragen zu ihrer Stratifikation bei.

Resumen Examinando las fundaciones en los Estados Unidos y en Alemania desde 1800 aproximadamente hasta la actualidad, desde una perspectiva histórico-sociológica, el presente artículo se centra en la importancia social de las fundaciones a lo largo del tiempo - qué relaciones sociales e intercambios promueven, qué principios directores institucionalizan, cómo acumulan carisma, cómo se relacionan con el bien público, y qué grupos sociales utilizan estos instrumentos con qué fines. En ambas sociedades, las fundaciones encarnan el principio de exclusividad cargada carismáticamente. Las fundaciones tratan de armonizar los objetivos individuales con una idea del bien común que se considera sacrosanta. Grandes sumas de dinero dedicadas al bien común poseen un carisma, haciéndolas bastante inmunes a la crítica y haciendo que se perciban de manera positiva. En este sentido, ocupan una posición central en ambas sociedades y contribuyen a su estratificación.

Keywords Philanthropy · Foundations · Elites · Comparative historical sociology · Charisma

Introduction

Since the 1990s, philanthropic foundations in Germany and all over Europe have undergone a remarkable renaissance, and a discourse on philanthropy has emerged (Münkler 2007). The number of new foundations created has soared, the legal framework in Germany has been substantially altered (in 2000, 2002, and 2007), and public attention has focused on foundations to an extent unimaginable even 25 years ago (Strachwitz 2001). The reasons are manifold: the decline of the welfare state, increased trust in non-governmental agents of public interest, and an accumulation of private wealth unprecedented in German history (Adloff 2010). But the rise of philanthropic foundations has not been accompanied by serious academic or public debate. Nevertheless, America is constantly referred as a model by promoters of the idea of philanthropy (cf. Hammack and Anheier 2013, p. 5).

This paper aims to provide a historical-sociological analysis of the part played by foundations in the philanthropic and nonprofit fields[1] of two western societies. Looking at foundations in the United States and in Germany from around 1800 to the present, I will focus on the social significance[2] of foundations over the course of time—which social relationships and exchanges they promote, which guiding principles they institutionalize, how they accrue charisma, how they relate to the public good, and which social groups use these instruments to which ends. The comparative design of the study aims to identify existing paths linking organized philanthropy, structures of giving and engagement, the state, civil society, and business (cf. Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas 2001; Stadelmann and Freitag 2011).

The state-centered German model, which is currently undergoing a comprehensive process of change, can be contrasted with the American model based on civil society (Toepler 1998). These major structural differences notwithstanding both countries have well-developed foundation fields. There are of course significantly more and far larger foundations in the United States, and the history of the German foundations has been repeatedly interrupted by wars, inflation, and totalitarian regimes. Nonetheless, the tradition of foundations in Germany goes back a long way, and there are more than 20.000 non-church-based foundations, a huge and significant number by international standards (cf. Anheier and Daly 2007).

Foundations as Charismatic Institutions of Gift-Giving

Philanthropic giving is by no means to be sociologically defined as a one-sided, purely solitary act of transferring property. Instead, it initiates and stabilizes social relationships. Following Mauss (1990), it can be said that the cycle of giving, receiving, and returning constitutes one of the most important social facts in society. Giving bears within it the potential for acts of solidarity and horizontal networking on the one hand and on the other hand, for distinction, differences in social status and agonistic hierarchies (cf. Blau 1964; Molm 2003; Adloff 2006). The paradox of the gift, then, is its capacity for fostering relationships that can both bring social actors closer together and set them further apart.

In the process of institutionalization, as well as detaching itself from the individual will of the founder to be transformed into a (philanthropic) form of organization, the stated aim of the foundation also structures and legitimates the social relationship between the giving institution and its respective beneficiaries (Adloff and Sigmund 2005). Bearing this in mind, a sociological definition of the

[1] I follow Fligstein and McAdam (2011, p. 3) in their definition of an action field that is "a meso-level social order where actors (who can be individual or collective) interact with knowledge of one another under a set of common understandings about the purposes of the field, the relationships in the field (including who has power and why), and the field's rules."

[2] With this emphasis, I agree with Prewitt (2006) who has shown that the legitimacy of foundations certainly cannot rest on what they have achieved in real terms in the 20th and 21st centuries (but see also Anheier and Hammack 2010). Compared with state actors, their resources are far too limited to justify any assumption of far-reaching impact (cf. Goldberg 2009). Methodologically, I will be using a small-N approach within historical sociology that owes more to historicism and that integrates explanations into historical narratives (Abell 2004).

foundation that points beyond legal categories and takes its lead from Mauss could be stated as follows: *If a gift creates a social relationship that is decisively defined and structured by the giver, that continues to exist after the giver's death, and that is constantly kept up to date, then it is a foundation.*

The identity of the foundation in the long term is guaranteed by two "safeguards:" by the lasting (legal) validity of the founder's written declaration of intent, and by regular and specific reminders of the foundation's stated aim issued by its representatives. Since classical antiquity, foundations have been based on a codified semantics that may not be infringed upon and which must be protected (cf. Laum 1914). As a result, they also always have an inherent sense of *memoria*, establishing a framework of memory (Halbwachs 1992). Motivated by generativity (i.e., wishing to leave behind something of him/herself that will be of lasting value, cf. Adloff 2009), the founder attempts to establish a social framework of memory that organizes the way future generations see him/her (in line with his/her wishes). Binding future generations to the will of the founder involves not only dues of memory, but also ties to institutionalized declarations of intent that claim value commitments and which may also be given a sacred or charismatic charge.

Shils (1972), following Weber and Durkheim, states that in any society, one can find objects, individuals, or institutions to which charismatic or sacred qualities are attributed (cf. Turner 2003). The central (sacred, charisma-charged) value-related institutions are usually esteemed, supported, and recognized. The members of a society show respect and deference toward the charismatic elements at its center. In the case of foundations, they are esteemed because focus lies on the common good.

One of the few social scientists who has followed Shils in his fundamental considerations of the concept of charisma in civil society is Alexander (1998). He gave Shils' concept a discourse-analytic turn: In Alexander's understanding, it is a matter here of a genuine cultural-symbolic sphere. This is structured according to the dichotomy of pure/impure or sacred/profane. A society consequently classifies according to dichotomous codes what it considers to be "good civil society" and what is excluded as "impure," "contaminated," or "uncivil". Thus, it can be said that since 200 years philanthropic foundations struggled to become part of "good civil society" in the USA as well as in Germany.

A Quantitative Overview

The following empirical data, beginning with American foundations,[3] give a basic outline of the field under study. For 2011, the Foundation Center in New York registered more than 81,000 Grant-making foundations, with assets worth a total of 662 billion dollars, and with expenditure for 2011 of 49 billion dollars (Foundation Center 2013). There were also around 4,500 operating foundations with assets worth 42 billion dollars and expenditure of 5.6 billion dollars. Under tax law, rather than providing grants to other organizations to further the foundation's goals, an operating foundation is one that implements its goals itself, directly (cf. Toepler 1999).

[3] Due to lack of space, community foundations are not dealt with here (cf. Hammack 2004).

Figures for recent years show huge growth in the American foundation field. In the three decades between 1975 and 2006, overall foundation assets grew by a factor of 5.4 when adjusting for inflation. If inflation is ignored, they even increased by a factor of 20. There has been a large increase in the overall number of foundations in the last 25 years: in 1980, there were just over 22,000 (Grant-making and operating foundations); in 1990, slightly more than 32,000; in 1995, just over 40,000; and in 2005, more than 71,000 (see www.foundationcenter.org). In the early twentieth century, the field grew slowly, with the first rapid increase recorded for the period 1950 through 1969. Then, in the 1970s, growth slowed right down, picking up again strongly from 1980. This corresponds to the development of wealth; since the early 1990s, the United States has overtaken all other industrialized nations in terms of unequal distribution of wealth. The Gini coefficient for wealth distribution rose rapidly from 0.80 in 1983 to 0.84 in 1989 and 0.87 in 1995. Only in the years 1922 through 1929 (i.e., until the Wall Street Crash) there was a similar degree of economic inequality (Wolff 1995, p. 13).

The five largest foundations—led by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, followed by the Ford Foundation, the J. Paul Getty Trust, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation—account for approx. 11 % of total foundation assets in the United States. However, the majority of American foundations have modest assets and thus pay out relatively small amounts: for the 40,400 family foundations (a vague category which has no legal status), the Foundation Center found that almost half had annual expenditure of less than 50,000 dollars (Foundation Center 2013).

In 2006, for the first time, more funds flowed into health than into education, a development linked to the huge amounts channeled into this field by the Gates Foundation (cf. Foundation Center 2008a). In the same year, the foundations in the northeastern United States were overtaken in their funding expenditure by those in the west of the country, where 37 % of spending went to the health sector.

Around 3.3 % of all foundations are corporate foundations founded by businesses. But with total expenditure of 5.1 billion dollars, the approx. 2,700 foundations of this type (as of 2011; see Foundation Center 2013) accounted for 10.5 % of overall foundation spending, making it clear that they are larger on average than private foundations. In terms of expenditure, the banking and finance sectors have the most corporate foundations and the largest share of total funding expenditure, followed by pharmaceuticals, trade, and insurance (Foundation Center 2008b).

Looking at the figures for which was responsible for what percentage of the total 316 billion dollars of giving (in 2012, see www.givingusa.org), we see that donations from private individuals count for a strikingly large portion at 72 %. Independent and community foundations account for 14.5 % of total giving, bequests make up 7 %, with 5.7 % being donations from companies and corporate foundations.

Whereas in the United States, information about foundations has been being collected systematically since the 1970s by the Foundation Center in New York on the basis of tax returns, quantitative empirical research into foundations in Germany only began in the 1990s. During its survey for the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (Anheier and Romo 1999), the Maecenata Institute for

Philanthropy and Civil Society played a key role in data collection and evaluation (cf. Sprengel 2001).

The following discussion of the situation in Germany draws on statistics from the Association of German Foundations and from the Maecenata Institute for Philanthropy and Civil Society.[4] Both sets of data are based primarily on voluntary disclosures from the foundations in question, so that one cannot assume, for example, that all of the foundations existing in Germany are included. Not all of the foundations included give information on every point (e.g., assets and expenditure). Consequently, statistical descriptions are to be treated with caution, and it is certainly not possible to make representative statements. The latest statistics from the Maecenata Institute (Sprengel and Ebermann 2007), whose evaluation is more painstaking and thus more reliable, relate to a sample of 12,370 foundations (as of September 2006) of which just over 30 percent gave details of their assets.

More than 68 % of the foundations surveyed in 2006 were created by private individuals, followed by statutory corporations or public bodies (12 %), societies or associations (8.3 %), and businesses (6.5 %). The long-term development from the 1950s to the present is interesting here: in the 1950s, over 50 % of foundations were created by corporate bodies (businesses, societies, associations, and statutory corporations). Only since the 1960s the majority of foundations have been created by private individuals (between 62 and 71 %; Sprengel and Ebermann 2007, p. 13). This delay clearly reflects the time taken to accumulate sufficient private capital in the postwar years.

Grouping by assets in spite of the limitation of data, it is striking that the percentage of foundations with assets of less than 250,000 euros sank between 1998 and 2006 from 52–46 %. Increasingly, the majority of foundations lie in the middle segment. Larger foundations with assets of over 2.5 million euros have not significantly increased their share, which lies at roughly 17 % (cf. Sprengel and Ebermann 2007). Most of the private individuals (49 %) and associations (54 %) create foundations in the lower segment with up to 250,000 euros. The majority of businesses and statutory corporations, on the other hand, created foundations with assets in excess of 500,000 euros.

The main tool when asking what foundations do, what they fund or finance, is an analysis of their stated purposes.[5] The following figures are based on details provided by just over 11,000 foundations in 2006 with a total of almost 20,000 stated purposes: 51 % of all German foundations are active in the social sector, 33 % in education, 22 % in science/research, nearly 23 % in culture and the arts, and 13 % in health (roughly half of all foundations pursue more than one stated aim, hence the total of over 100 %). Since 1945, the "social purposes" category has shrunk continually. New categories have been added, with sport, international understanding, environment/animal protection, and religion in particular all growing by an average of 2 % points between 1999 and 2006 (ibid.: 57).

[4] The Association of German Foundations represents the interests of German foundations. It was founded in 1948 and currently has over 3,800 members.

[5] This is a highly problematic procedure (not only in Germany but also in the USA): Most foundation grants can be characterized in many different ways; the description is left to the foundations, which may be more concerned with their public image. (I am grateful to one of the reviewers who pointed that out).

Germany can be said to have experienced a foundation boom. In the last 15 years, new foundations between 500 and 1,000 have been created every year. In the 1980s, the yearly figure was around 150, and in the 1950s and 1960s just 35–55. Due to this rapid growth, most of the foundations currently in existence are very young: over one-third were founded in the last 15 years and far more than two-thirds since 1950, with rebuilding of the foundation field after 1945 progressing very slowly at first.

Some additional details can be derived from the statistics of the Association of German Foundations. Data on the regional distribution of foundations are especially instructive (cf. BDS 2008, 2014): of roughly 20,000 foundations in civil law (as of 2013), most are located in North Rhine-Westphalia (over 3,900), Bavaria (3,650) and Baden-Württemberg (more than 3,000); the city state of Hamburg alone has 1,300 foundations. The federal states with the least foundations are those in the former East Germany. This distribution—especially the comparison between Catholic Bavaria and Protestant Hamburg—shows that foundations are not a religious or denominational phenomenon, and that they flourish in very different historical contexts. In Bavaria, the field is based primarily on a core of foundations linked to the Catholic Church and a secular element related to the accumulation of wealth in the postwar period. By contrast, Hamburg has long been a liberal Protestant civil society based on commerce, industry, and a confident middle class.

Examining a period of several decades shows that the creation of philanthropic foundations (unlike the charitable giving of lower and middle income groups) is stimulated and increased at times when philanthropic elites are given specific scope for action. There is strong evidence for the notion that the creation of philanthropic foundations is driven less by demand than by supply (Adloff 2009, 2010). In phases of major capital growth, the number of new foundations also rises. In postwar Germany, for example, it was not until the 1980s and 1990s that sufficient wealth had been amassed again, some of which was then transferred into foundations. Capital growth among the wealthiest 10 % of the German population has been huge since the 1990s (Bergmann 2004), and this correlates to the fact that roughly one-third of all foundations in Germany were founded in the last 15 years.

Philanthropy in the United States and Germany in the 19th Century

The roots of the American charitable corporation lie in the 18th century, but it only emerged as a distinct legal entity in the first half of the 19th century—at the same time as the German Historical School developed the foundation as an institution having legal capacity (as opposed to a trust) (Hall 2000; Richter 2001). In the early 19th century, the United States had few benefactors wealthy enough to create a foundation, but after the Civil War this quickly changed. Until 1819, the year of the famous Supreme Court ruling in the dispute over Dartmouth College, there was no legal scope for charitable corporations with the status of an independent legal entity capable of ownership (cf. Neem 2003). The ruling dealt with the question of whether the legislature should be allowed to alter a corporate charter. The court ruled against this, stating instead that the purpose of the original charter was

decisive and worthy of protection. Following this judgment, corporations began to achieve greater independence from the state. This was accompanied by the separation between public and private corporations, linked to the fact that institutions like universities (such as Yale and Harvard), which had originally been considered part of the public sector, were seeking to assert themselves as private corporations, allowing them to claim freedom from the dictates of the state. In this way, the United States took a path that granted precedence to the autonomy of foundation capital dedicated to a specific purpose under civil law over the state's attempts to intervene—and this paved the way for America's path to the civil society impressively described by Tocqueville.

In the early 19th century, this led to an associational revolution. McCarthy has shown that the republican upheaval in the association sector was profoundly linked with the activity of women. Since the 1790s, women controlled a large number of social institutions for women and children (McCarthy 2003, p. 31). These activities took place within a religious framework: many charitable institutions were run by reformed Protestants or by the Quakers. Even before the Second Great Awakening, women played a key role in the spread of Protestantism, and this was closely linked to the disestablishment of the churches: more and more churches lost the (financial) support of the state and became dependent on voluntary support from their members, hence their feminization (ibid.: 32).

In Germany, on the other hand, the enlightenment movement led to an ongoing conflict between state and church (Strachwitz 2005). With secularization came a huge decline in the number of (primarily religious) foundations, faced as they were with fundamental criticism. Initially, it was monasteries and convents whose church properties and extensive lands were to be transferred to state ownership. In the eyes of the Enlightenment, these assets were detrimental to the common good. This criticism also applied to foundations, and the practice of binding current generations to the will of long-dead benefactors in particular was considered to be at odds with reason (Liermann 1963, p. 173).

The first half of the 19th century was then characterized by a prolonged transition from royal to civic patronage that was especially pronounced in royal cities such as Berlin, Dresden, Munich, or Stuttgart. Cities with no royal court such as Bremen, Hamburg, Leipzig, and Frankfurt developed a stronger municipal civic culture that was almost free of the influence of court culture and aristocratic elites (Adam 2007). This transition to civic patronage was driven by a differentiation between the state and the person of the ruler, the social rise of educated and wealthy citizens, and the growing autonomy of art (Frey 1999, p. 43).

At the beginning of the 19th century, a restorative, politically motivated legal program against associations and foundations was pushed through, using state tutelage and patriarchal welfare to establish a bulwark against individual autonomy, with the additional aim of achieving emancipation from the influence of the church. Whereas the American foundation model of the 19th century was based on emancipation from the influence of both state and church, in Prussia, the path toward emancipation from the church could be said to have led to closer relations with the state. The modern foundation as it exists in Germany today—a legal entity equipped with assets to realize the will of its founder—is the result of the legal

dogma of the German Historical School of the early 19th century (Richter 2001). Nonetheless, the often negative, paternalistic attitude of the state did not prevent such activities, either among associations or among foundations. With the new industrial wealth of the late 19th century, Germany saw a resurgence in charitable giving and the creation of major new foundations.

Adam (2001) has drawn attention to the very similar dynamic in Germany and the United States in these years. As he shows, the civic cultures of Leipzig, Toronto, Boston, and New York had more similarities than differences. Moreover, in the second half of the 19th century, specific philanthropic models were imported from German and British towns into the United States (and Canada). Leipzig's Museum of Art, for example, played a model role in this knowledge transfer, acting as a blueprint for the founding of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Industrialization, urbanization, and the so-called "social question" posed new sociopolitical challenges, to which the creation of foundations was a response (ibid.: 89). For Nuremberg and Berlin, Adam showed that from 1850 onward, the number of foundations rose by approx. 30 % each decade, with an explosion of growth after 1890. Although the philanthropy of these years harked back to a variety of older traditions, it was also genuinely modern: institutionalized philanthropy became a civic means for solving social problems and also served to spread bourgeois norms and views (cf. Kocka and Frey 1998). Cities were the main focus of such philanthropic activity, and the smaller the influence of rulers and authorities in a given city, and the greater the cohesion of its middle classes, the more incentive there was for civic philanthropy. In Nuremberg, for example, there was a tradition of patronage and philanthropy stretching back centuries centered on the patriciate. Those who created foundations around 1900 were concerned with being recognized by and integrated into the center of society, they attempted to develop personal visions for social change, and they were at pains to preserve the prestige they had secured for their descendants (Adam 2009). Finally, they occupied spaces within civil society, accrued charisma, and tried to define the rules governing those public spaces: to this end, they established structures of governance that were private but related to the public sphere—often in consultation with the municipality and with an eye to state (in some cases imperial) recognition as the centers of power. In the Wilhelmine era, there was also increasingly close cooperation between leading municipal figures and philanthropists, leading to elaborate institutional projects in the form of private–public partnerships including the founding of schools and colleges of commerce in Leipzig (1896), Frankfurt (1900), Cologne (1901), and Mannheim (1908) as well as the creation of Frankfurt University as a foundation in 1914 (Hein 1997). Clearly, neither the legally required administrative model for foundations nor the specific administrative praxis involved prevented this boom in foundations, thus disproving the widespread notion that the dominance of the state is "an obstacle to the formation of a culture of civic philanthropy" (Richter 2001, p. 218). Instead, serious thought must be given to the fact that in spite of state dominance in Germany—and at the same time in the United States—a culture of civic philanthropy in cities was able to flourish. Here, social competition, accrual of charismatic charge and scope for activity for philanthropically minded elites went hand in hand.

In Germany, these developments were brought to an abrupt end by World War I and the subsequent hyperinflation. Thousands of foundations were dissolved and the political and social tensions of the Weimar years unsettled the middle classes to such a degree that philanthropy waned drastically. The building of the welfare state and the taking over of many cultural activities by municipalities and federal states also contributed to this downturn in large-scale philanthropic activity (Retallack and Adam 2001). In Germany, civic philanthropy reached its high point around 1900—often in cooperation with the Prussian state—before switching to a marginal position in the Weimar Republic and postwar West Germany (Frey 1999, p. 231). Under the two totalitarian regimes of the 20th century, on the other hand, it disappeared completely.

The Emergence of the American Philanthropic Foundation

With the growth of industrial wealth around the turn of the century, a new type of organization emerged around 1910: the large philanthropic foundation created by industrialists was to shape the foundation field of the 20th and 21st centuries around the world (cf. Hammack and Anheier 2013). The so-called robber barons of this time had accumulated huge fortunes: it is estimated that in 1880, the United States had less than 100 millionaires; by 1916 there were 40,000, some of whom possessed more than 100 million dollars. Around 1900, Andrew Carnegie, who had sold his steel empire to J. P. Morgan, owned assets worth around 350 million dollars, while John D. Rockefeller had around 200 million dollars, a figure that rose to 900 million dollars by 1913 (Smith 1999, p. 37).

Having amassed huge fortunes, then, some industrialists of the time faced the problem of constantly accumulating more wealth than could be spent on charitable works. At the same time, they distanced themselves from the conventional concept of charity. This new movement in philanthropy was equated with an attempt to deal with society's problems by addressing the 'root causes'. The modern idea of philanthropy was marked by an optimistic confidence in science and technology (Katz 2006; Bulmer 1995). Furthermore, the philanthropic foundation was based on broad objectives oriented toward the common good, allowing it to respond flexibly to changing social problems by shifting the focus of its funding activities as required: the stated purpose of the Rockefeller Foundation, for example, was "to promote the well-being of mankind throughout the world." The scientific model of the first large-scale foundations was strongly influenced by medicine, especially by theories from the field of bacteriology (Smith 1999; Sealander 2003). The self-image of such foundations privileged the active shaping of social conditions, coupled with an optimistic belief that the social problems associated with urbanization, immigration, and industrialization could be overcome with the help of science.

This new philanthropic movement also represented an attempt to establish private institutional alternatives to the "threat of state socialism." The failure of progressivism left great scope for private initiatives whose content was progressivist—medicine, social welfare, etc.—but that were not close to progressivism in

political terms, rejecting a major role for the state (Karl and Katz 1981). The first generation of industrial philanthropists "thought the weak state was uniquely the virtue of the United States. What concerned them and their fellow American elites of the time was to keep it that way. […] So the need at home was to apply their private methods to public problems" (Katz 2001, p. 5f). In addition, a look across the Atlantic showed them European countries like Britain and Germany were reacting to calls for social justice with state measures—which was precisely what business leaders in the United States did not want to happen. Instead, together with many progressivists, their attention focused on private initiatives. The big foundations created in those years addressed problems on a national scale, doing so at a time when the American state had a limited capacity to act nationally (Lenkowsky 1999).

What at first appears as an addition to the American philanthropy of the 19th century by the creation of large foundations was by no means the inevitable realization of a path already embarked upon (cf. Pierson 2004). Instead, it was a highly contingent process into the center of society: everything could have been quite different. The Rockefeller Foundation, for example, that became a model for many other foundations created in its wake, did not take the form originally planned. In 1910, John D. Rockefeller and his advisor Frederick T. Gates planned to found a trust that would be handed over to the public in the form of a government corporation, essentially a foundation governed by public law. The members of the board were to be endorsed by representatives of public institutions. The plan was rejected by Congress, causing an irate Rockefeller to dramatically restrict the scope for public influence. It can be assumed, then, that the private nature of American philanthropic foundations has its roots in this dispute that prevented the creation of a public agency and which must be viewed as historically contingent (cf. Karl and Karl 1999; Hall 1992). If Congress had accepted Rockefeller's offer, one might conjecture that the foundations and the nonprofit field would have taken a different route with less emphasis on private control. The American concept of the philanthropic foundation was thus created in a specific historically contingent time window, becoming an influential force with a legacy stretching far beyond the borders of the United States.[6] In the second half of the 20th century, on the other hand, it was strongly criticized, resulting in such major transformations that one can no longer speak of an unbroken historical trajectory since 1910.

The Consolidation of the American Foundation Field in the Second Half of the 20th Century

Following the expansion of state activity in the course of the New Deal of the 1930s and especially from the 1950s, American foundations, too, found themselves obliged to consult more closely with the state (Sealander 1997; Karl and Karl 1999). In the 1950s, for example, the state became involved in funding for science and the

[6] The American concept of philanthropy and civil society is currently being introduced into the emerging global society (see Vogel 2006; Hammack and Heydemann 2009).

arts. Networks linking foundations and government institutions took shape on domestic and international topics, allowing funding programs (such as the War on Poverty) to be coordinated. It is important, then, to dispense with the preconception that foundations in the United States occupy a domain completely separate from the state. The activity of the large foundations from their origins around 1910 until far into the 1970s was marked by close ties with the state (Smith 1999; Nielsen 1972), either in the way pioneering projects were later coordinated with the authorities, or in an advisory capacity.

Moreover, the work of foundations in the United States became increasingly professionalized, and thus more isomorphical (cf. DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Aksartova 2003) to other organizations, in the course of the 20th century, especially since the 1970s, among others due to university courses in nonprofit management. Such processes of professionalization are above all processes of inter-organizational standardization, and in this case they also involve accession of members of the middle classes to the foundation field (cf. Hall 1992; Abbott 1988). Isomorphic standardization through professionalization is particularly evident when the original benefactor dies and the institution must become independent of this individual: concepts with a broad base in society—trusteeship, professionalism, integration into civil society, etc.—then increasingly assert themselves over the founder's idiosyncrasies. Whereas in the 1950s and 1960s, those nonprofit organizations (NPO) with good contacts to a trustee were the most likely to receive funding, the system underwent fundamental changes from the 1970s: obtaining funding now depended not only on an NPOs reputation, but also on its ability to submit increasingly detailed project information (cf. Frumkin 1999). For NPOs, the main result of this change was the need to engage with the procedures of different foundations, making it necessary to employ their own fundraising experts.

Since the end of the 1960s, as a result of an episode of contention through public criticism and state pressure, American foundations have become insecure of their societal status and have also committed themselves to greater transparency and begun to display a greater sense of legitimacy and accountability (cf. Toepler 1998). Especially the Tax Reform Act of 1969 (that placed foundations under federal supervision, set requirements for disclosure, restricted the scope for holdings in companies, and defined minimum annual payouts) led to critical public observation of foundations (Frumkin 1999). Setup in the 1970s, on the initiative of John D. Rockefeller III, in response to a new legal situation, the "Commission on Private Philanthropy and Public Needs" (better known as the Filer Commission) examined the nonprofit sector and developed proposals for reform. As soon as the Tax Reform Act came into force, foundations began to discuss the need for increased publicity through annual reports, as the limited existence of such documents had been one of the commission's main criticisms. A new policy with respect to applicants was also advocated, with foundations increasingly viewing themselves as partners of the NPOs they funded. Finally, foundations increasingly conducted evaluations of their own work to establish minimum standards of professionalism and to promote openness and accountability (cf. Hall 2004).

The notion of a so-called third, independent, or nonprofit sector as an umbrella term for all tax-advantaged organizations can be traced back to the work of this

commission. Rockefeller's vision consisted in the creation of an "independent sector" that would be publicly accountable and distanced both from the traditional concept of charity and from business (Karl and Karl 1999, p. 66). The emergence of an isomorphic organizational field of NPOs (Fligstein and McAdam 2011) can be attributed to processes of professionalization and to the interaction of foundations with the state in the 1960s and 1970s (cf. Clemens and Guthrie 2011). In the United States, and now also in Germany and other European countries, it has since been taken for granted that foundations are part of a nonprofit field. Consequently, foundations wish to partake in the legitimacy and charismatic symbolic value of the nonprofit field as a whole.

German Foundations in Recent Decades

After 1945, developments in Germany and the United States were no longer synchronized, leading to significant differences in the foundation fields. According to Strachwitz (2007), 1945 was also a "year zero" for foundations. Whereas a survey by the Bavarian State Statistics Office in 1910 counted just over 20,000 foundations, the first postwar register listed just over 1,000. The revival of foundation activity in (West) Germany gathered serious momentum from the 1980s and 1990s. Unlike in the United States, however, foundations in Germany made their impact on the common good not via transparent decision-making processes but through elitist networks of bourgeois self-affirmation and hierarchical relations of giving.

Alongside a sub-field of foundations with their roots in 19th century German corporatism, there is also a "liberal" sub-field that emphasizes its independence from the state and which has been expanding since the 1980s with a marked increase in new foundations. These are the findings of a qualitative comparative survey of foundations in over 20 European countries (Anheier and Daly 2007). Although most foundations are still integrated into a corporatist sector with close ties to the state, performing mainly social tasks, transformations in the German welfare state and growing interest among the wealthy in less state-oriented solutions have swelled the liberal sub-field in recent years.

Today, almost a third of Germany's more than 20,000 foundations still work in the social sector, and social foundations can be said to have been a constant factor in (usually urban) public services over centuries. Many of these social foundations were created in the 19th century, while new foundations increasingly tend not to be active in this field. Among those active in the social field, there are many operating foundations whose services are funded by public social- and health-insurance bodies. This form of embedding within structures of social corporatism is something these foundations share with other nonprofit organizations working in the fields of social services and healthcare (cf. Zimmer 1997).

By contrast, those active in the liberal sub-field are typically wealthy citizens, often entrepreneurs, whose philanthropic activities emphasize freedom, autonomy in the sense of control over funds and independence from the state, while also reflecting a concern for the common good (Timmer 2005). Foundations have also

benefited from positive public attention and from new legislation, including tax incentives passed in 2000, simplified creation of foundations under civil law in 2002, and a further reform of the tax incentives in 2007 (cf. Adloff and Strachwitz 2011).[7] Astonishingly, although discussions ahead of these reforms often cited the United States as an exemplary model, the more restrictive tax rules compared with German legislation were barely mentioned—the United States are still considered especially foundation friendly.[8]

Like those in most other European countries, German foundations now cultivate an image of themselves as *innovative* institutions acting independently of (if complementary to) the state (Anheier and Daly 2007, p. 41). In this way, adding legitimacy and charismatic symbolic value is claimed by embroidering on the abstract idea of the common good of innovation, even though there is no evidence that foundations really promote it—on the contrary, foundations integrate isomorphically into existing structures and thus tend to be conservative in their activities (DiMaggio and Anheier 1990; Gerber 2006). The alleged innovative power of foundations is an attempt to align themselves with a higher legitimating idea. This charismatic charge brings social recognition, as shown by analyses of the public discourse of recent years (Kalupner 2000).

In Germany, the trend toward professionalization began toward the end of the 1990s. Unlike the surge in professionalism in the United States 40 years ago, this change is taking place at the same time as restructuring of the welfare state and marketization of the nonprofit field (cf. Adloff 2010): national and European associations of foundations are playing an ever greater role; foundations are establishing networks of knowledge transfer; universities are launching courses in nonprofit management; advice is being sought from American foundations in the fields of professionalization and evaluation; and research institutes are being created. With recent roots in America, the notions of "strategic philanthropy" and "venture capital" are now proving very popular in the liberal foundation field in Germany, and they are being recommended to German foundations in general with reference to the United States (cf. Hoelscher et al. 2010). This new style of "effective" philanthropy applies management strategies to nonprofit activities, essentially transferring the concept of a worthwhile investment to the philanthropic field. The former distinction between the logics governing activities in philanthropy and business is becoming increasingly blurred. There is a strong tendency within American philanthropy toward increased control of NPOs by funding bodies, making grants dependent on the fulfillment of clearly defined conditions (Ostrander

7 Private donors were now given the possibility of deducting up to a million euros from taxable earnings over 10 years if they provided capital for a foundation.

8 Compared to America's public charities—a variant on the foundation—the difference becomes especially clear (cf. Colombo 2007): Public charities raise their funds from a far broader base than private foundations and they are given bigger tax breaks as a result. Not only are private foundations that derive their capital from a single source disadvantaged as an institution compared to public charities, but also the donor, too, derives more benefit from donating to a public charity. The current situation in Germany is almost the opposite: private foundations set up by wealthy individuals are privileged, while charitable associations that derive their funds from a broader base of donors are at a disadvantage (cf. Adloff and Strachwitz 2011).

2007)—a tendency that is now being followed by the big foundations in Germany and other European countries.

Differentiation, Foundations, and Elites

In socially differentiated societies, as Keller (1963) wrote decades ago, social unity can no longer be represented by one elite. Instead, partial elites perform specialized functions so that one can distinguish roughly between elites oriented more toward efficiency (politics and business) and the cultural elites. Reframing the question of how the logics of different action fields within society can be related, Nassehi (2006) speaks of the task of translation to be performed by "differentiation elites." These elites perform a bridging function at positions within society where the problem of translation and integration arises.

Foundations are often located at the interface between different logics of action, they are initiators of cooperation, bridge-builders, or—according to Bourdieu (1998)—institutions for the conversion of capital from one form to another. Business elites can use foundations to build bridges into the political, social, cultural, and scientific fields, thus broadening their sphere of influence. Using a foundation, someone in an elite position within society can make the transition to the differentiation elite, as a translator, or even to a value elite, since philanthropic foundations are strongly value oriented and charged with charisma. Not only do elites create foundations, but also foundations create elites.

The question is if there are parallels between Germany's foundation boom of the 1990s and 2000s and the current transformations of elites. The current focus on elites in Germany (cf. Münkler et al. 2006) is due to the dissolution of the postwar corporatist model for the mediation of interests and the ensuing processes of disintegration among sub-elites. As large businesses have extricated themselves from corporatist ties and political obligations, the trade unions are also no longer viable partners or guarantors for links between business activities and the common good. Commercial activity must now provide its own justification. With the demise of the integrative and corporatist system of horizontal compromises (Streeck 2006), economic elites have become more visible and are using philanthropy to demonstrate their values and underpin their role as leaders within society as a whole. At the same time as being released from their institutionally regulated and enforceable obligations toward society, then, economic elites are using the media to perform their voluntary shouldering of commitments—a constellation resembling the situation in the United States since the 1970s.

The typical self-image within elite philanthropy includes a rather negative attitude to the state, considering that influence should be wielded by the individual philanthropist rather than by the state. Both liberal and conservative philanthropists agree on this (see Odendahl 1990). This is clearly not (only) about the cosmetic legitimization of wealth and social inequality in a capitalist economy by "giving back to society". Instead, it is also and above all a matter of social influence and the potential to exert a shaping force via philanthropy. Individuals and families are

clearly motivated by this desire to exert a shaping influence on both business and philanthropic activities (cf. Ostrower 1995, 2002).[9]

Conclusions

On both sides of the Atlantic, the creation of industrial wealth around 1900 led to a blossoming of philanthropy and patronage. In both countries, the wealthy (and educated) made a transition from collective forms of philanthropy to individual and more exclusive forms, leading to the creation of more foundations. In spite of the dominance of the state, Germany also saw a boom in foundations: those engaging in philanthropy sought institutional charisma, recognition and prestige, exerted a shaping influence on society in the name of the common good, and made a contribution to the nation on the basis of civic values. In some cases, German philanthropists actively sought close ties with the state. In America, during the Progressive Movement, the focus increasingly shifted to developing alternatives to state planning. Instead of cooperation with the state, this was primarily a challenge to the nascent state from private actors. The creation of the Rockefeller Foundation consolidated this privatization of the foundation field, scientific philanthropy was the buzzword and scientific concepts for the betterment of society were heavily funded. Until 1914, Germany, too, saw substantial private funding of research, scholarships, institutes—something that is mostly forgotten in current discussions.

In both countries, the philanthropic activity of those years also reflected disputes over status within elites: the old hands versus the newcomers. In this context, funding high culture was an effective means of acquiring status and prestige (cf. DiMaggio 2006). Social causes were also considered, but usually with reference to specifically middle-class concerns. The period around 1900 also saw close transatlantic ties that fostered the exchange of models for action. In both societies, civic and bourgeois traditions clearly played a big role in the formation of a culture of philanthropy that is self-reinforcing insofar as it incorporates motivational structures of recognition and charismatic symbolic value. As a result of the developments in central Europe—World Wars, inflation, crisis of democracy, Nazism, Soviet-style socialism—the parallels between the two societies ceased.

First, however, a similarity has to be mentioned which exists in spite of this different sequencing: in the United States, too, the work of foundations largely complements the activities of the state, even if no clearly visible discourse is or has been conducted on the subject (cf. Toepler 2007). From a historical viewpoint, the link between state activity and philanthropic foundations cannot be described in terms of a simple crowding out theory. State funding of the arts, for example, varies hugely between Germany and the United States: in Germany, over 90 % of the cultural sector's income comes from state sources, while in the United States the figure is just over 10 % (Toepler 1998). In spite of this, arts funding tops the list of

[9] Institutionalized philanthropy also serves the establishment and perpetuation of a dynasty. Using philanthropy as a means of dynastic activity has the advantage that large-scale private wealth can be associated with trusteeship to the benefit of society (cf. Hall and Marcus 1998). The best example is the Rockefeller family who over many decades epitomized trusteeship and philanthropy.

funding priorities for German foundations. Conversely, the example of the social sector shows that relatively restrained social-political activity on the part of the state (as in the United States) does not automatically lead to the setting up of foundations in a given field. Foundations, then, are not created and organized to fit social demand.

The 1970s saw a transformation take place in the development of the American foundation field. The Tax Reform Act of 1969 puts the field under isomorphic state pressure, leading to increased accountability—a development that is only just beginning in Germany. The field became increasingly professionalized, calling into question the supremacy of the trustees within the foundation organization and leading to an institutional conversion (Thelen 2003). The accountability of foundations to society has since become an established issue in public debate.

In the West Germany of the immediate postwar years, foundations were slow to develop. Only in the 1980s the philanthropic field did become more dynamic: more foundations were created, and there emerged a liberal foundation field that distanced itself more clearly from the state. This development was supported by upheavals in corporatist structures and in the German welfare state. Freed from corporatist obligations, the new philanthropic elite presented itself as a mediating force, claiming to lead and exert a shaping influence within society. In recent years, the foundation field has been further dynamized by the introduction of concepts from business management, as the work of foundations has been increasingly reorganized around conditional giving, inter-organizational reciprocity, and the granting of venture capital. Such economization processes are typical of the development of the foundation field in America and, for some years now, also in Germany (cf. Hoelscher et al. 2010).

Striking similarities exist between German and American philanthropists: those who create foundations clearly represent a sub-category within the group of the wealthy that seeks both to exert a shaping influence on society and to control the funds provided, combining individualism with an emphasis on the common good, and thus constituting a special social elite. For elites seeking to become a differentiation or value elite, foundations offer an interesting, prestigious tool as they can be combined with a shaping influence that leads to social recognition. As we have seen, this can occur in competition or cooperation with the state, implying forms of giving more strongly based on either solidarity or hierarchy. Unlike more widespread forms of charitable giving, the creation of foundations constitutes an elite culture of its own. Paradoxically, then, although Germany is more strongly oriented toward the state, the democratic accountability of its philanthropic elites is less well developed than in America's foundation field that has been obliged to open up to public controls and forms of giving based on solidarity. In Germany, criticisms are only now slowly beginning to emerge, for example, concerning the dubious practices of individual large foundations (Schuler 2010).

Looking back from the viewpoint of historical sociology, the differences between Germany and the United States are sometimes major and sometimes very minor, which also shows that the American trajectory has seen more breaks and changes than is commonly assumed. In most cases, foundations try to harmonize extremely individual objectives with something higher that is considered sacrosanct. Large

sums of money dedicated to the common good possess a charisma, making them extensively immune to criticism and causing them to be perceived positively. In this sense, they occupy a very central position within society and contribute to its stratification.

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